Riverside, Calif. – Today’s actions by the State Water Resources Control Board, to allow water suppliers to self-certify their ability to meet water demand in light of continuing drought, hits home for California residents, including those in Western Municipal Water District’s service area. Following nearly five years of drought, and nearly a year of mandatory reductions, Western’s customers will finally experience some relief.

This action will reduce Western’s mandated Conservation Standard from the current 28 percent. The State Board action acknowledges the proactive planning and water resource management by local water agencies like Western years before the drought began. Western worked diligently with other water suppliers on behalf of customers throughout the state to ensure State Board decisions on water restrictions accounted for the efforts our customers had implemented prior to the Governor’s 2015 mandate to reduce water use by 25 percent.

“Western has been working with the State for more than a year to adjust the mandates to recognize agencies that have already made great strides in water use efficiency,” stated Western’s General Manager, John Rossi. “This modification is a result of Western’s thoughtful, long-term water resource planning. In 2008, Western adopted a Water Use Efficiency Plan, which served as a roadmap for future water challenges, such as our current drought conditions.”

In May 2015, Western was mandated to follow a Conservation Standard to reduce water use District-wide by 32 percent. Less than one year later, the standard was lowered to 28 percent, to account for growth and climate equity. Collectively, since June 2015, Western customers have saved 5,488 acre-feet of water, the equivalent to more than 1.7 million gallons of water. Western is a committed resource to customers seeking water use efficiency solutions through landscape evaluations, workshops and rebates.

Western is in the process of analyzing its next steps and will complete the required self-certification process. It will take more than one good water year for California to recover from many years of low snow pack and precipitation. “Customers need to realize that we are still in a statewide drought, with predicted hot summer months. Throughout the state, we continue to struggle with catching up for years of record-low snowfall,” shares Rossi. “However, the modified restrictions do provide flexibility on how Western will move forward in implementing water restrictions.”

Customers will need to remain vigilant with their water use. The State Board requires water suppliers to submit their self-certifications for approval. The Western Board of Directors will be considering adoption of a lower Water Shortage Contingency Plan Stage at the June 1 Board meeting. It is likely that a multi-step approach will be required—adopting a Stage with lesser restrictions, waiting for the Governor to declare an end to the drought emergency, and then returning to a non-drought Stage of Western’s Shortage Plan.
Moving forward, Western will continue to work with the State Water Resources Control Board, and the California Department of Water Resources, on the development and implementation of revised State Standards. The long-term plan will emphasize a statewide efficiency strategy accounting for local supply availability and wise water use.

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*Western Municipal Water District provides water supply, wastewater disposal and water resource management to the public in a safe, reliable, environmentally sensitive and financially responsible manner.*